

In the Claims:

Claim 11 is amended. Claims 5-10, 12-14, 17-22 and 24-26 are canceled.

1. (previously presented) An image processing system comprising:

an image processing unit for processing input photograph images; and

an output unit for outputting an image processed in the image processing unit;

wherein said image processing unit has a function of cutting out a background portion of the photographic image and effecting a color specification for said cut out background portion of the image and further has a function of specifying a method of processing the background portion, and when printing the photographic image, said output unit recognizes the background portion on basis of said color specification specified by said image processing unit and carries out background processing for the recognized background portion on basis of said specified method of processing the background portion to replace the background portion of the photographic image with a background pattern adapted to be printed without creating areas of perceptible unevenness, to avoid visual unevenness from accruing in the background portion,

wherein said output unit converts pixels into the background pattern and replaces the background portion of the photographic imagery with a printed discontinuous pattern on basis of the specified method of processing the background portion, and

wherein said discontinuous pattern is chosen from a group consisting of a stripe pattern and a dot pattern.

2. (canceled)

3. (canceled)

4. (original) An image processing system according to claim 1, wherein said color specification specifies a uniform density of a specific color.

5. (canceled)

6. (canceled)

7. (canceled)

8. (canceled)

9. (canceled)

10. (canceled)

11. (currently amended) The method of claim 10 An image processing method comprising the steps of:

replacing a background portion of a photographic image with a specified background indicator design;

specifying a method of processing the background portion;  
and

transmitting the image with the background portion replaced by the specified background indicator design, and information indicating the specified method of processing the background portion; and

at an output unit:

receiving said image with the background portion replaced by the specified background indicator design and information indicating the method of processing the background portion;  
said output unit recognizing the background portion by detecting the specified background indicator design in the received image data; and

said output unit processing the recognized background portion according to the received method of processing to replace the background indicator design of the background portion with a background pattern capable of being printed substantially without unevenness perceptible to the human eye, to provide an output image that avoids visual unevenness from accruing in the background portion,

wherein the background pattern is discontinuous, and  
wherein the discontinuous background pattern is chosen from a group consisting of a striped pattern and a dotted pattern.

12. (canceled)

13. (canceled)

14. (canceled)

15. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 1, wherein said input image comprises a photograph image of a person.

16. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 15, wherein said image processing system thereby replaces a background portion of the photograph image of a person with a background suitable for identification photograph use.

17. (canceled)

18. (canceled)

19. (canceled)

20. (canceled)

21. (canceled)

22. (canceled)

23. (previously presented) An image processing system according to claim 1, wherein said image processing unit recognizes the boundary between the image and the background

portion of the image to define the background portion for cutting out.

24. (canceled)

25. (canceled)

26. (canceled)